Happiness

Happiness in Practice Project

Positive Psychology & Community Resilience

2025-1-IT02-KA210-ADU-000350376

Toolkit for educational and community practice

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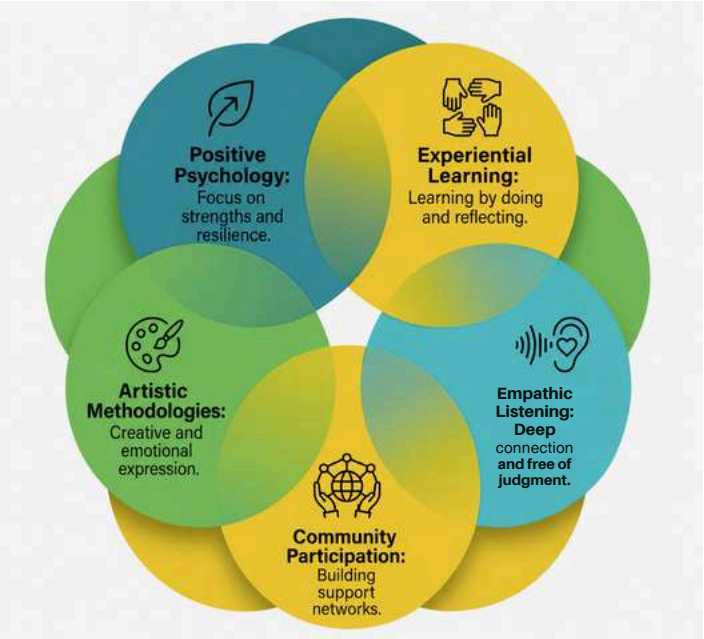
About the project

Happiness in Practice: Positive Psychology & Community Resilience is a small-scale Erasmus+ cooperation project in adult education, developed by organizations in Italy, Spain, and Belgium. Its aim is to promote well-being, emotional resilience, and community connection, especially among people experiencing vulnerability, stress, or isolation.

The project understands well-being as a relational and participatory process, built through meaningful connections, mutual support, and access to practical tools for daily life. From this perspective, it integrates positive psychology, experiential learning, artistic methodologies, and empathetic listening to generate educational practices focused on care and community.

Through workshops, local activities, and a European community of practice, resources and methodologies have been developed to strengthen empathy, emotional awareness, and collective resilience. This toolkit compiles these lessons and offers accessible and adaptable tools for professionals and organizations, from an educational, preventative, and non-therapeutic perspective.



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Toolkit reading keys

This toolkit has been designed as a practical, flexible and adaptable resource. To use it meaningfully, it is important to keep in mind some keys that run through the entire document and guide both the reading and the application of the activities.

EDUCATIONAL, PREVENTIVE AND NON-THERAPEUTIC APPROACH

The toolkit addresses well-being and resilience from an educational and preventive perspective. It does not replace clinical or therapeutic interventions, but rather proposes activities aimed at reflection, participation and shared learning.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation is free and flexible: each person decides how much and how to get involved. The process is based on trust, respect and care for individual times, without pressure.

FROM THE BODY TO THE WORD

Well-being and participation are not only worked on through discourse. This toolkit uses multiple languages: body, breath, gesture, image, symbol, story, listening, silence and shared creation.

FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE COLLECTIVE

The methodology begins with the concrete experience of each person — their needs, resonances, emotions or perceptions — and only then does it broaden the focus to relationships, environmental resources and the collective dimension

LISTENING AND LIMITS

Listening plays a central role in this toolkit, but not as an unlimited opening. Good listening also involves respecting limits, not invading, not overinterpreting and not turning care into control.

SHARED LEARNING AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The toolkit should not be understood as just a collection of activities. It is also a tool for nurturing shared learning processes between professionals, teams and communities.

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How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is not intended as a book to be read from beginning to end, but as a practical resource that can be opened, consulted and used according to the needs of each group, context or session.

HOW IT IS ORGANIZED

Chapter 1 presents the general methodological framework. Chapter 2 contains the activity sheets, which form the practical core of the toolkit. Chapter 3 offers templates for planning sessions. Chapter 4 outlines ethical criteria and guidelines for facilitation. Chapter 5 summarizes lessons learned from the project experience in Modena and Valencia. Chapter 6 focuses on replicability and adaptation. The appendices include expanded materials.

HOW IT CAN BE USED

An experienced facilitator can go directly to the activity sheets. A team that wants to design a learning path can combine various tools with the help of the session planner. Someone new to the process can start with the methodological framework.
It can also be used in different contexts: short workshops, community processes, cultural spaces, libraries, non-clinical support groups or training itineraries for professionals.

AN IMPORTANT CLARIFICATION

This toolkit is not therapeutic. It does not aim to diagnose, treat, or cure. It does not teach how to "be happy" as if there were a universal formula. Its purpose is to offer practices, languages, spaces for listening, and facilitation tools that help make everyday life more livable, more conscious, and more connected with others.

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Chapter 1. Methodological Framework

1.1. On the general approach

This toolkit is developed within an adult education approach that understands well-being as a personal, relational, and communal experience. It does not treat well-being as an abstract goal or a permanent ideal state, but rather as a process that can be strengthened through accessible practices, meaningful connections, spaces for participation, and shared resources.

1.2. Who is it aimed at?

The toolkit is primarily aimed at professionals working with adults in educational, social, cultural, or community settings. This includes educators, trainers, facilitators, social workers, mediators, and community engagement agents. While the project has focused particularly on adults between 35 and 60 years old, the methodology can be adapted to other groups as long as its relational, gradual, and non-clinical approach is maintained.

1.3. Why a practical toolkit

The intention of this resource is not to offer an extensive theoretical exposition, but rather to provide teams with a series of tools that can be applied in practice. Therefore, this toolkit translates the project process into an operational format. It brings together methodologies that have already been explored and tested in international workshops, group sessions, and community settings.

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1.4. How we understand happiness and well-being

In this toolkit, happiness is not understood as a fixed, permanent, or idealized emotional state. Nor is it presented as an abstract goal to be achieved once and for all. Rather, it is understood as a cultivable experience, linked to practices, habits, relationships, and forms of self-care that can be strengthened over time.
From this perspective, well-being depends not only on external circumstances, but also on the possibility of developing intentional actions that foster greater awareness, gratitude, connection, emotional regulation, and meaning. This view, inspired by the

Positive psychology guides the entire toolkit: many of the proposed activities seek precisely to counterbalance the human tendency to focus predominantly on the negative, helping to recognize resources, maintain relationships and broaden the perception of what does nourish daily life.
In this context, talking about happiness doesn't mean denying conflict, suffering, or vulnerability. It means recognizing that even in complex situations, it's possible to strengthen personal and community capacities that make life more livable, more conscious, and more connected to others.

1.5. European context and social need

This toolkit responds to a growing social need in the WHO European Region, as well as in countries such as Italy, Spain and Belgium: the increase in emotional distress and its impact on daily life, especially among middle-aged adults, who often face work, family and economic pressures.
According to data from Flash Eurobarometer 530, 46% of people reported experiencing emotional or psychosocial problems in the past year, and more than half of them (54%) did not seek professional help.

In response to this scenario, Happiness in Practice proposes accessible, community-based, and non-clinical approaches that strengthen resilience, emotional awareness, and social connection. The toolkit thus serves as a preventative and educational resource, designed to address real needs within community contexts and contemporary adult life.

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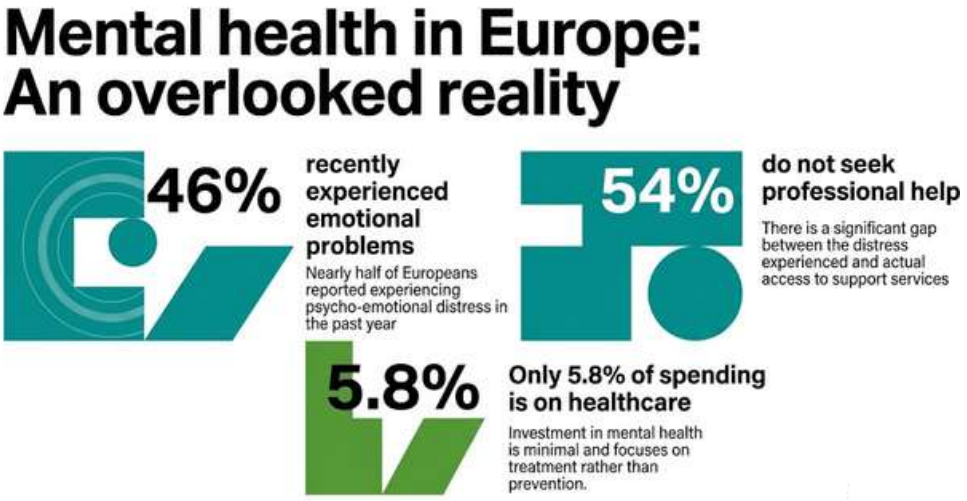

1.6. Positive Psychology and Well-being

One of the pillars of the toolkit is positive psychology, understood not as naively optimistic thinking, but as an approach that pays attention to human strengths, coping resources, the capacity to flourish, and the conditions that favor a life with more meaning, connections, and awareness.

Within this framework, the project uses the PERMA model as a reference, which identifies five interconnected dimensions of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement. These dimensions are not understood as abstract goals, but rather as axes that can be addressed through concrete individual and collective practices.

1.7. Experiential learning and co-creation

The project is based on a central methodological principle: well-being is not transmitted as a fixed concept, but rather experienced, reflected upon, and built collaboratively with others. Therefore, the toolkit adopts an experiential learning approach, with a co-creation logic where the tools take shape in relation to the group, the context, the territory, and the facilitation.

1.8. The community of practice as the core of learning

The Community of Practice (CoP) is one of the core methodological elements of the project. Following the perspective of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, the community of practice is based on the idea that learning does not occur solely individually, but also through interaction with others and participation in real-world contexts.

The CoP articulates three inseparable dimensions: a shared domain or interest, a community based on relationships and belonging, and a practice composed of knowledge, tools, and resources that are developed collectively.

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1.9. Empathetic listening as a methodological practice

Empathetic listening is one of the most important methodological foundations of this toolkit. It is not limited to a specific technique nor does it appear only in specific activities. It is a cross-cutting quality of the approach that permeates facilitation, community work, shared reflection, and the building of a community of practice.

Empathetic listening doesn't simply mean hearing what another person says. It means offering genuine, unhurried, and non-invasive attention, capable of embracing words, silence, emotion, ambivalence, and even boundaries.

1.10. Individual well-being and community dimension

Another distinctive feature of this approach is that it does not reduce well-being to an individual experience. The project is based on the premise that well-being also depends on the quality of relationships, the opportunity to be heard, the presence of accessible cultural and community spaces, and the forms of recognition that circulate within a group.

1.11. Multiplicity of languages

The toolkit doesn't work solely with the spoken word. It's based on the idea that well-being and participation are expressed through multiple languages: body, gesture, breath, image, symbol, storytelling, listening, silence, movement, and shared creation.

1.12. An educational and not a therapeutic approach

The toolkit is explicitly situated within an educational, preventative, and community-based framework. Working from this framework means that participation must be voluntary, that no one is obligated to expose themselves more than they wish, and that the objective is not to analyze people but to create conditions for listening, reflection, and shared learning.

1.13. From the personal to the collective level

One of the project's most valuable methodological keys is not to begin by asking directly about "the community" in the abstract. Instead, it starts with personal experience: needs, emotions, rhythms, perceptions, memories, and resonances. Only then does it broaden its focus to include relationships, the group, and the resources of the surrounding environment.

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1.14. What does this toolkit offer?

Taken together, this toolkit proposes a way of working on well-being that combines attention to personal strengths and resources, listening to needs and vulnerabilities, the quality of relationships, the value of the body and experience, the importance of cultural and community spaces, and the shared construction of meaning.

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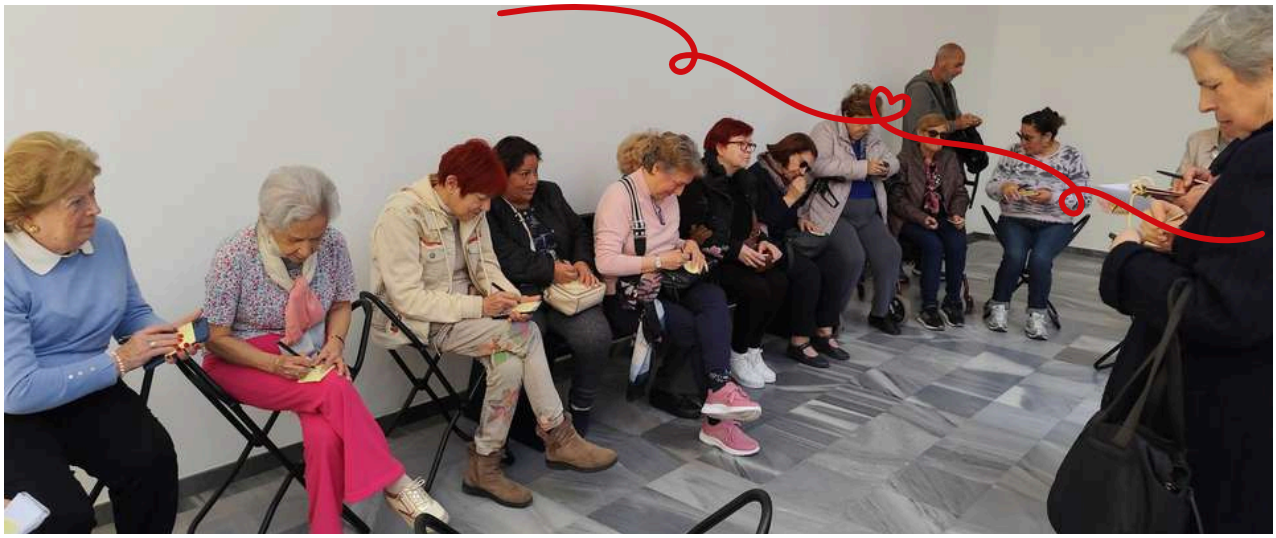
Chapter 2. Activity Sheets

How to choose an activity

The activities in this toolkit are not intended to be used in a fixed order or as a mandatory itinerary. Before choosing an activity, it's helpful to ask yourself a few simple questions:
What stage is the group at? In new groups, proposals that are accessible, more substantial, less personal, and have a clear structure tend to work better.
What is the objective of the session? Some tools help to activate energy and cohesion; others promote individual reflection or the work of listening and empathy.
How much real time is available? It's preferable to do a short, well-sustained activity rather than trying to include too many proposals without time for integration.
What level of depth can be sustained? Some activities have a low barrier to entry; others require more trust and a more careful approach.
What kind of language does this group need? In multilingual contexts, it is often helpful to start with proposals where the body, gesture, image, or symbol have weight.
How will the session be closed? It is always advisable to plan for a transition, integration, or closing activity.



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Quick guide: which tool to use depending on the objective

IF THE GOAL IS...	RECOMMENDED TOOL	WHY IT MIGHT BE USEFUL
Log in and activate power	LAUGHTER YOGA	It helps break the ice, reduce inhibition, activate the body, and quickly create cohesion.
Generate a brief and accessible reflection	POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICES	They allow you to work on strengths, gratitude, needs, and emotional awareness in short formats.
Open continuity between sessions	DAILY PRACTICES	They translate the project's focus into small, realistic, and sustainable actions.
Working on listening, trust, and relational connection	CIRCLE OF EMPATHY	It promotes presence, non-invasive listening, mutual recognition, and the creation of a safe space.
Exploring care, dignity, and vulnerability through fiction.	THE DOOR	It allows for addressing complex topics through literature, without forcing autobiographical exposition.
Make the connection visible and strengthen the community	THE RED THREAD	It functions as a symbol of connection, shared memory, and cohesion between people and sessions.
Moving from individual experience to collective reading	COMMUNITY EMOTIONAL MAP	It helps to identify needs, tensions, resources, links, and forms of cohesion.
Design a complete session	SESSION PLANNER	It allows for the articulation of a coherent sequence, taking care of opening, development, integration, and closure.

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Sheet 1

LAUGHTER YOGA

Body activation, group cohesion

WORKSHEET 1: LAUGHTER YOGA		
Duration: 15–30 minutes	**Group:** Flexible	**Facilitation Level:** Basic or intermediate
Space: Wide, open room	**Materials:** Not essential. Optional background music.	**Type:** Body activation, group cohesion

Objective:

Creating an atmosphere of trust, relational availability, and shared energy through the body, breath, and laughter reduces initial tension and fosters connection among participants. This practice works particularly well as an icebreaker and as a tool for overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers.

When to use it:

At the beginning of a session, after a break, at the start of an intensive workshop, or as a brief exercise to energize the group. It is especially useful in new groups, multicultural contexts, or moments when fatigue or inhibition is perceived.

What is it:

Laughter yoga combines deep breathing exercises with induced laughter and body movement. It's not about telling jokes or provoking verbal humor, but about activating a physical and relational disposition that facilitates shared laughter.
In the Valencia workshop, the practice helped to break down linguistic and cultural barriers from the first minutes of each day, contributing to transforming a group of strangers into a participatory and open community.

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Step-by-step development

1. **Openness and bodily predisposition**
Invite the group to stand in a circle or spread out around the room. The facilitator introduces the practice in a simple way, explaining that the goal is not to "do it right," but to participate with openness and curiosity.

2. **Conscious breathing**
Guide several deep, expansive breaths, with slow inhalations and prolonged exhalations. The aim is to prepare the body, reduce tension, and foster openness for the shared practice.

3. **Activation games**
Introduce simple and playful movements that help to release rigidity: walk around the space, look at each other briefly, change direction, play with a small laugh that gradually grows.

4. **Shared laughter**
Suggest short sequences of induced laughter in pairs, in small groups, or while moving. Laughter often transitions from being voluntary to becoming a shared, spontaneous response.

5. **Final integration**
To end the practice, slow down the movement, return to your breath, and take a brief moment of silence or body awareness. You might ask yourself a short question: "How does my body feel now?" or "What sensations are you left with?"

What does it contribute?

Facilitating encounters between people who do not know each other
Reduce tension and inhibition
Activating the body as a language of participation
To foster trust and cohesion
Prepare the group for listening activities and deeper reflection

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Suggestions for facilitation

The facilitator must participate authentically. The group's energy depends largely on the facilitator's attitude. It's advisable to maintain a warm, clear, and not overly explanatory tone. In multicultural contexts, this practice can be an excellent entry point because it allows for connection without relying on verbal language.

Aspects to consider

It should not be imposed. Participation can be gradual. In very private groups, it is advisable to start with gentler breathing exercises or shared movement.
It is also not advisable to maintain activation for too long without a good final transition.

Possible variations

As a brief 10-minute opening
As a complete 20–30 minute practice
As a post-lunch pick-me-up
As a cross-cutting theme in multi-day workshops

Sheet 2

CIRCLE OF EMPATHY

Structured listening, group connection

SHEET 2: EMPATHY CIRCLE
Structured listening, group connection

Duration: 60–120 minutes	**Group:** 8–24 people	**Facilitation level:** Intermediate or advanced
Space: Circle of chairs without barriers	**Materials:** Chairs in a circle. Optional talking piece.	**Type:** Structured listening, group connection

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Objective:

Create a safe and non-invasive space for listening, presence, and shared words, where people can express themselves, feel heard, and reflect together without entering into debate, judgment, or immediate advice.

When to use it:

It is suitable when the group already has a minimum of trust or when you want to open a space of relational depth after an introductory activity.

What is it:

The empathy circle is a structured dialogue methodology based on active listening, presence, non-interruption, and respect for each person's pace. It does not seek debate or quick problem-solving.

Its function is to strengthen empathy, relational awareness, group security, and the possibility of building shared understanding without invading anyone's experience.

Step-by-step development

1. **Space preparation**
   Arrange the chairs in a circle, avoiding physical barriers. The circular shape reinforces equality, belonging, and mutual support.
2. **Presentation of the framework**
   Explain the meaning of space: listen without interrupting, avoid premature advice, do not debate, respect silences, participate voluntarily.
3. **Opening round**
   Propose a simple opening question: "What word brings you here today?", "What brings you to this circle?", "What do you need to be present here?"
4. **Topic Development**
   Introduce the central theme of the circle. The facilitator can support the process with open-ended questions: "What image or word resonates with you?", "Where do you connect this to your experience?"
5. **Final integration**
   To end the practice, slow down the movement, return to your breath, and take a brief moment of silence or body awareness. You might ask yourself a short question: "How does my body feel now?" or "What sensations are you left with?"

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6 **Closing**
End with a brief round: "What are you taking with you?", "What word will you use to close?". You can also close with silence or a small exit ritual.

What does it contribute?

Strengthening group trust
Making the experience of being heard visible
Helping to recognize emotions without reducing them
Expand understanding from multiple perspectives
Building cohesion without the need for total consensus

Suggestions for facilitation

The facilitator's presence is key. It's not about directing the content, but about maintaining the framework. Calmness, warm neutrality, active listening, and the ability to avoid rushing to fill silences are fundamental.

Aspects to consider

This methodology can open up intense content. It must always remain within its educational, not therapeutic, framework. Participation should be voluntary, and the depth of the material should not be forced.

Possible variations

As a short circle of 45–60 minutes
As a central part of a long session
As a collective response to a shared reading or experience
As a recurring space in a community of practice

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Worksheet 3

THE DOOR

Shared reading, ethical reflection

SHEET 3: THE DOOR
Shared reading, ethical reflection

Duration: 90–120 minutes	**Group:** 8–20 people	**Facilitation level:** Intermediate or advanced
Space: Circle of chairs or library	**Materials:** Excerpt from *The Door* by Magda Szabó. Printed or projected copies.	**Type:** Shared reading, ethical reflection

Objective:

To use literary fiction as a projective resonance to open a collective reflection on care, dignity, vulnerability, betrayal, dependence, loneliness, power and limits in human relationships.

When to use it:

Fiction is appropriate when a sensitive topic needs to be addressed without requiring direct autobiographical exposition. It works well in educational, cultural, and community contexts where literature can act as a symbolic mediator.

What is it:

This activity is based on Magda Szabó's novel *La puerta*, used in the project as a "Protected Projective Resonance." Literature allows for approaching difficult issues without requiring people to speak directly about themselves, focusing instead on the characters' stories. The conflicts these characters experience open up the discussion on recurring themes that affect the group, but without exposing themselves.
In Valencia, working with the book generated a very rich exchange between Italian and Spanish participants, showing how different cultures read the same story differently.

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Step-by-step development

1. **Text preparation**
Select a short, clear, and meaningful excerpt in advance. It should be accessible and, if the group requires it, offered in more than one language.

2. **Brief introduction**
Present the proposal without turning it into a literature lesson. The aim is not to analyze the work academically, but to use it as a gateway to shared reflection.

3. **Individual or group reading**
Allow time for silent reading or reading aloud. You can invite students to underline a word, phrase, or image that particularly resonates with them.

4. **Opening with one word**
Ask each person to provide a single word that summarizes what the text leaves them with. In Valencia, words like betrayal, pain, guilt, limit, dignity, power, silence, and sacrifice emerged.

5. **I work in small groups**
Divide the group and offer open-ended questions: Where is the line between caring and controlling? What does it mean to respect the dignity of someone whose way of life we find difficult to understand?

6. **Sharing**
Return to the larger group and gather the main emerging themes.

7. **Closing**
Close with a brief, open-ended question: "What does this text leave in your life or practice?", "What question accompanies you now?"

What does it contribute?

- Opening up complex topics without forcing autobiography
- Working on empathy and boundaries through cultural mediation
- Generate intercultural dialogue
- Enriching the understanding of care and dignity

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Suggestions for facilitation

It's important to maintain the text's ambiguity and not jump to conclusions too quickly. The strength of the activity lies precisely in the fact that it doesn't offer simple answers.

Aspects to consider

The proposal may touch on intense topics. Therefore, it's advisable to carefully prepare the excerpt, the tone, and the questions, and remember that no one is obligated to apply the content to their personal life.

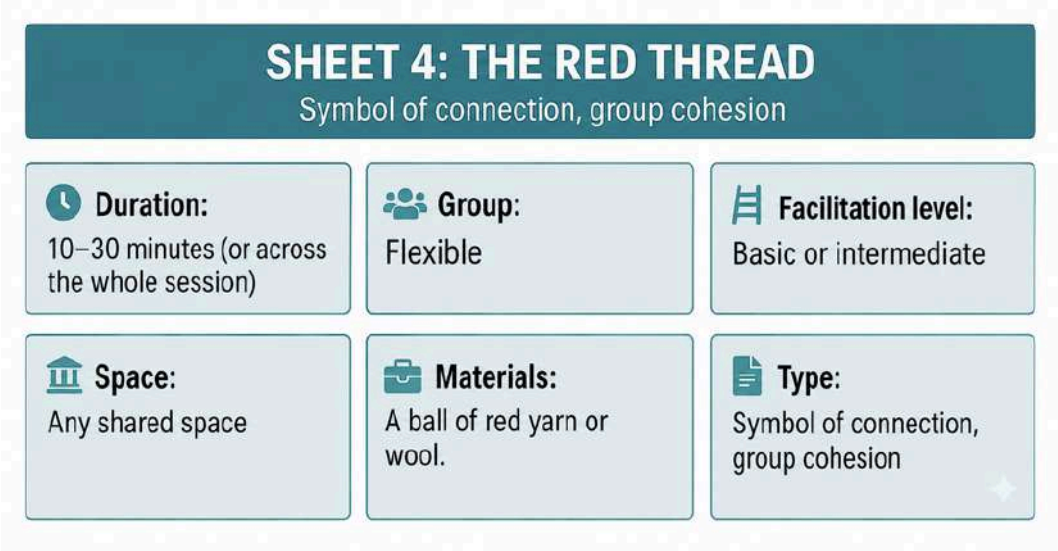
Possible variations

As a standalone session
As a prelude to a circle of empathy
In libraries, reading clubs, or cultural spaces
As a trigger for work in communities of practice

Sheet 4

THE RED THREAD

Symbol of connection, group cohesion



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Objective:

To make visible the network of links that is woven in a group, to reinforce the sense of belonging and to offer a simple symbolic resource to accompany processes of encounter, listening and community building.

When to use it:

It can be used as an opening, a closing, a rite of passage between activities, or as a guiding thread throughout several sessions. It works especially well in processes where the idea of community, continuity, and mutual care is to be emphasized.

What is it:

The red thread is a very simple yet powerful symbolic tool. In this project, it represents the visible and invisible bond that is built between people when they share presence, listening, care, and experience.
In the Community Emotional Map, the red thread appears as the transversal dimension that runs through all levels of experience, uniting the personal, the relational, cultural resources and body cohesion.

Step-by-step development

1. **Symbol presentation**
   The facilitator introduces the red thread, briefly explaining that it will be used to represent the connection. There's no need to over-explain it.
2. **Passed from hand to hand**
   The ball of yarn is passed from one person to another. Each participant holds the yarn while sharing a word, a feeling, or a brief idea. A visible network is formed.
3. **Network observation**
   Before gathering the thread, it's a good idea to take a moment for the group to look at the shape they've created. This helps the symbolic experience to settle.
4. **Closure or integration**
   The facilitator can invite a final question: "What holds this network together?", "Where do you feel this thread continues outside of this room?" A small fragment can also be cut out for each person to keep a piece.

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What does it contribute?

- Making interdependence visible
- Strengthen the sense of belonging
- Helping to close a session with meaning
- Connect different activities or meetings
- To offer a physical and emotional memory of the shared process

Suggestions for facilitation

It's best to introduce it simply and let the group fill in the gaps. It works best when it's not overly intellectualized. Gestures, images, and shared silence are often more eloquent than a lengthy explanation.

Aspects to consider

It should not be used mechanically or emptyly. If it is used as a ritual, it must be connected to something real that the group has experienced.

Possible variations

- As a closing to a session
- As the opening of a work cycle
- As a narrative thread between several sessions
- As part of the Community Emotional Map

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Happiness

Sheet 5
POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICES

Brief reflection, awareness of resources

SHEET 5: PRACTICES OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
Brief reflection, resource awareness

Duration: 10–30 minutes per activity	**Group:** Flexible	**Facilitation level:** Basic
Space: Any quiet space	**Materials:** Paper, pens, simple templates (optional).	**Type:** Brief reflection, resource awareness

Objective:

To offer simple, evidence-based exercises to strengthen awareness of strengths, gratitude, needs, emotional awareness, and the ability to recognize resources present in everyday life.

When to use it:

At the beginning or end of a session, as an independent practice, as a transition between activities, or as a personal resource between meetings.

What is it:

These practices include brief exercises inspired by positive psychology and adapted to educational and community contexts. Their purpose is not to impose optimism or deny difficulty, but to help balance attention, recognize existing resources, and strengthen personal and relational skills.
In the project, positive psychology is presented as one of the methodological pillars, in connection with the PERMA model.

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Step-by-step development

1. **Three good things**
   Each person writes down three positive things that have happened recently and takes a moment to reflect on why they happened. They can share one with a partner or in a small group.
2. **Identifying strengths**
   Invite each person to identify two or three qualities they recognize in themselves and to think about how they use them in their daily life.
3. **Observation of needs**
   Using a simple wheel, each person identifies which needs they feel are more present or less nourished: recognition, security, autonomy, belonging, joy, rest, meaning, etc.
4. **Guiding phrases**
   The facilitator reads open-ended phrases that invite inner reflection: "It affects me because...", "I realize that...", "I need more...", and "I don't have a clear answer, but...". A brief silence follows each phrase.

What does it contribute?

Increase awareness of resources

- To foster a kinder relationship with oneself
- Making needs and strengths visible
- Facilitate entry into or exit from a session

Suggestions for facilitation

It's best to present them as invitations, not as tests. The goal isn't to evaluate or obtain "good answers," but to encourage observation and reflection.

Aspects to consider

These practices should not become "mandatory positivity." If someone is going through a difficult time, the proposal is not to deny it, but to also create a space to acknowledge support, resources, or needs.

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Possible variations

- As a 10-minute opening
- As a session close
- As individual work between meetings
- As support for empathy circles or session planners

Sheet 6

DAILY PRACTICES

Micro-practices for well-being

SHEET 6: DAILY PRACTICES

Daily well-being micropractices

Duration: 2–10 minutes per activity	**Group:** Individual, pair or group	**Facilitation level:** Very basic
Space: Any	**Materials:** None essential. Tracking sheet or optional calendar.	**Type:** Daily well-being micropractices

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Objective:

Translate the project's approach into short, accessible, and sustainable actions that can be incorporated into everyday life, both individually and in small groups.

When to use it:

Between sessions, as a follow-up proposal, as inspiration for calendars or wellness diaries, or as supplementary material in educational and community processes.

What is it:

Everyday practices embody the lighter, more sustainable, and transferable dimension of the project. Their logic is simple: small, repeated actions can contribute to cultivating greater well-being, mindfulness, connection, gratitude, and care.
The project calendar offers numerous examples organized throughout the months: self-care, gratitude, hope, kindness, connection, body care, openness to new things, and community involvement.

Step-by-step development

1. **Self-care**
   Permission to rest, speak kindly to yourself, take conscious breathing pauses, observe what you feel without judging it, avoid perfectionism.
2. **Gratitude and recognition**
   Write down things you value, acknowledge achievements, thank other people, make a list of things that sustain life.
3. **Openness and learning**
   Try something new, break out of your routine, learn with other people, explore an idea, or develop a personal quality in a creative way.
4. **Kindness and connection**
   Listen attentively, express appreciation, help someone, call someone far away, share something valuable.

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What does it contribute?

- Sustaining the process between sessions
- Facilitate continuity without overloading
- Turn the toolkit into a resource for real-world use
- Strengthen autonomy and transfer

Suggestions for facilitation

It's best to present them as achievable proposals. It's better to invite people to choose one or two meaningful practices than to propose too many.

Aspects to consider

They should be realistic and not seen as just another obligation. It's also important to avoid turning them into a list of self-imposed demands.

Possible variations

- As a monthly calendar
- As choice cards at the start of a session
- As a follow-up between workshops
- As an individual resource or as supplementary material in the toolkit

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Happiness

Sheet 7

COMMUNITY EMOTIONAL MAP

Participatory tool for collective reading

SHEET 7: COMMUNITY EMOTIONAL MAP

Participatory tool for collective reading

Duration: Half a day or a full day	**Group:** 8–25 people	**Facilitation level:** Intermediate or advanced
Space: Large room with walls and large surfaces	**Materials:** Large paper, markers, sticky notes, images, red string.	**Type:** Participatory tool for collective reading

Objective:

To help a group to identify, name and represent in a shared way their emotional and relational landscape, making visible the needs, tensions, resources, links and forms of cohesion present in a community.

When to use it:

Especially useful when the goal is to move from individual experience to a broader understanding of the group or community. It can be applied in educational, cultural, social, and community contexts.

What is it:

The Community Emotional Map (CEM) is a participatory tool designed to help a group collectively understand its emotional and relational reality. It is not a geographical map, but a map of meaning: a visual and collective representation.
It is explicitly defined as an educational and preventative tool, not a clinical or therapeutic one.

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Step-by-step development

1. **Space preparation**
   Arrange a first layout in a circle and a second area for visual work. Prepare accessible materials and a large support surface.

2. **Bodily and relational openness**
   Begin with a short activation and confidence practice, such as laughter yoga, breathing exercises, or movement.

3. **Entry through the personal (Level 1: Emotional needs)**
   Invite each person to identify needs, emotions, or significant elements of their current experience. This can be done through brief writing, drawing, a needs wheel, or paired conversation.

4. **Expansion to the relational plane (Level 2: Relational Nutrition)**
   Explore how listening, recognition, trust, visibility, and other forms of relational support circulate within the group.

5. **Empathy and boundaries (Level 3)**
   The most delicate level. Cultivating empathy as a practice that requires boundaries, respect, and care. Issues of dignity, vulnerability, and the limits of care.

6. **Cultural Resources (Level 4)**
   Identify places, practices and resources in the environment that promote well-being and participation: libraries, museums, cultural centers, public spaces.

7. **Visual construction of the map and closure (Level 5: Body and cohesion)**
   Organize words, symbols, colors, and images on a common surface. The red thread can be used to connect different levels. Observe the constructed map and ask: "What is becoming visible here?", "What resources are appearing?", "What needs more attention?"

What does it contribute?

- Turning diffuse perceptions into shared understanding
- Helping a group to see themselves in a different way
- Articulating emotion, relationship, culture and territory
- Strengthen cohesion
- Generate useful material for future community actions

Suggestions for facilitation

It's best not to rush the process. The transition from the personal to the collective requires time and care. The map should include both vulnerabilities and resources, connections and possibilities.

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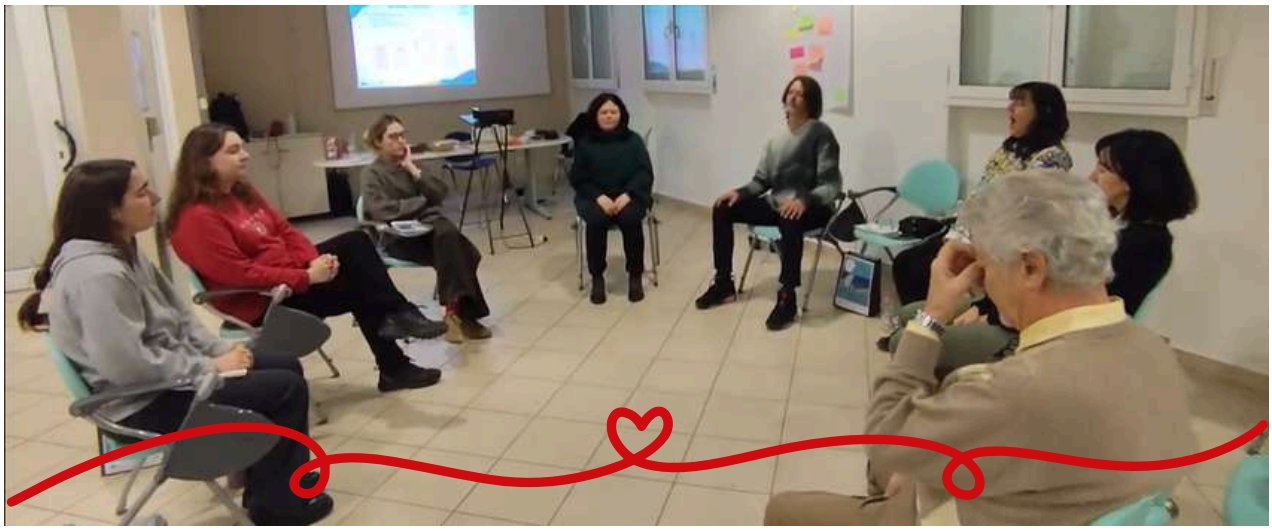
Aspects to consider

It should not be used as a diagnostic or clinical tool. The level of empathy and boundaries requires special attention.

Possible variations

This sheet provides a brief operational introduction. The extended version of the Community Emotional Map is included in Appendix 1 of this toolkit.



Chapter 3. Session Planner

This chapter offers simple models for combining the toolkit activities into coherent, realistic, and adaptable sessions.

One key idea runs through all the proposals: it's always important to be mindful of the emotional arc of the session. Begin with an opening that fosters presence and trust, progress gradually, and close in a controlled and secure manner. It's not advisable to end a session at the peak of intensity.

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3.1. How to combine activities

Before planning a session, it is advisable to take into account four basic criteria:

Group Stage
In new groups, brief, physical, and non-invasive proposals work best. In consolidated groups, room can be opened for methodologies of greater depth.

Intensity Level
Laughter Yoga and everyday practices are good entry points. The Empathy Circle, "The Door", or the Community Emotional Map require a more careful framework.

Available Time
It is preferable to have a few well-sustained activities than too many proposals without space for integration.

Type of Objective
Some sessions seek to activate and build cohesion; others, to reflect; others, to generate a collective reading or to open a longer process.

3.2. Basic structure of a session

1 **Opening** A short activity that helps to arrive, breathe, activate presence, and connect with the group.

2 **Development** The main activity or work block, where the session's objective is deepened.

3 **Integration** to collect resonances, observe what was lived, and give meaning to the shared experience.

4 **Closing** A clear and non-abrupt exit that allows people to return to their everyday rhythm.

3.3. Model 1 — Short 90-minute session

Model 1
Short session

Duration
90 minutes

Suitable for
New groups ✓
Introductory sessions ✓
Time-constrained contexts ✓

0:00 – 0:15 Opening with Laughter Yoga (short version, without intensifying too much)

0:15 – 0:30
Positive psychology practice: three good things, needs, or recognition of strengths

0:30 – 1:00 Brief listening circle with a simple question ("What word do you come across with today?")

1:00 – 1:15 Integration: sharing an idea or word that has resonated

1:15 – 1:30 Closing with the red thread or choice of daily practice for the week

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3.4. Model 2 — Half-day session (3–4 hours)

Block 1
Opening and activation: laughter yoga or gentle body dynamics of presence

Block 2
Positive psychology practice or emotional needs (individual or in couples)

Break
Informal space — part of the relational process

Block 3
Main activity: empathy circle, The Door, or short version of the Community Emotional Map

Block 4
Collective integration in large or small groups

Closing
Red thread, a final word or daily practice chosen by each participant

3.5. Model 3 — Full-day workshop (6–7 hours)

09:00 – 09:30 Arrival and body opening: laughter yoga or activation dynamic with name and gesture

09:30 – 10:15 Brief framework + personal practice (needs, strengths or relational well-being)

10:15 – 11:30 Main Activity I: The Door, Circle of Empathy or Relational Nutrition

11:30 – 11:45 Break

11:45 – 13:00 Main Activity II: Empathy Circle or Introduction to the Community Emotional Map

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch — informal spaces are part of the relational process

14:30 – 15:00 Brief reactivation: short laughter yoga or gentle movement

15:00 – 16:30 Cultural resources and well-being: cultural visit or mapping of resources of the territory

16:30 – 17:00 Closing and integration: red thread, small commitment or daily practice

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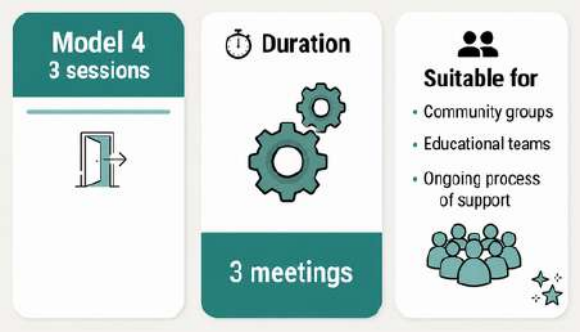
3.6. Model 4 — 3-session itinerary



Session 1: Arrive, open
Laughter Yoga · Brief practice on needs or strengths · Listening round · Daily practice for the week

Session 2: Listen, delve deeper
Brief opening · The door or circle of empathy · Exchange in small groups · Closing with a red thread

Session 3: Mapping, projecting
Brief activation · Introduction to the Community Emotional Map · Cultural resources · Closing with questions about continuity and community of practice

One key idea runs through all the proposals: it's always important to be mindful of the emotional arc of the session. Begin with an opening that fosters presence and trust, progress gradually, and close in a controlled and secure manner. It's not advisable to end a session at the peak of intensity.

3.7. Recommendations for adapting the planner

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The best planner isn't the one who includes the most activities, but the one who knows how to choose what's necessary for that group and that moment. Planning isn't about filling time, but about creating a meaningful sequence.

Chapter 4. Guide for facilitators

The quality of this toolkit depends not only on the activities it proposes, but also on how they are facilitated. Within the framework of Happiness in Practice, facilitation means creating conditions that allow a group to participate, explore, reflect, and build shared meaning from an educational, preventative, and not therapeutic perspective.

The same tool can open up a valuable process or remain a superficial experience depending on the framing, the rhythm, the listening, and the care with which it is sustained.

4.1. The role of facilitation

The facilitator is not there to provide definitive answers or interpret the experiences of others. Their primary role is to maintain the framework, guide the process, and help the group find its own rhythms, words, images, and connections.

- Create a safe space and explain its meaning without overloading with theory.
- Take care of timing and transitions
- Observe what happens in the group
- Holding silences, emotions, and differences
- To bring the experience to a close properly, without leaving the group "open"

4.2. Presence, listening and calm

One of the most important skills is presence. The group quickly perceives whether the facilitator is truly present. Calmness, clarity, and the ability to listen act as a framework for the process.

Listening involves recording
Silences · Tensions · Rhythms · Discomfort · Body movements · Changes in group energy.
Often, a brief and well-placed intervention is worth more than a lengthy explanation.

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4.3. Clear framework: educational, preventive and not therapeutic

This point must be made explicit from the beginning of any session.

What this framework implies in practice
Depth is not forced. People are not interpreted. Work is not based on diagnosis. The aim is not to "cure." Personal history is not invaded. Guaranteed emotional transformation is not promised.

Clarifying this framework does not limit the power of the work. On the contrary, it protects the participants and provides methodological certainty for the facilitator.

4.4. Voluntary participation and personal pace

No one has to share more than they want to. Depth is achieved through trust, not pressure. This means offering invitations, not impositions, allowing different ways to participate, and not equating silence with a lack of involvement.

4.5. From the personal to the collective

It's best not to ask for abstract reflections on "the community" too soon. It usually works better:

- Enter through the body, gesture, or breath
- Move on to a simple personal observation
- Then open the exchange in pairs or small groups.
- Finally, expand to the collective level.

4.6. Multiplicity of languages

Facilitation shouldn't rely solely on words. Effective facilitation also means knowing when less talk and more experience are needed. This is especially important in multilingual or intercultural groups, or with people who are not used to talking about themselves.

4.7. How to hold emotions without invading

When an intense emotion arises, the task is not to "resolve" it but to hold it clearly and without intrusion.

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Useful interventions
"Take your time." "You can stop if you need to." "Nothing more needs to be said." "Thank you for sharing as much as you want to share."

Supporting is not pushing. Sometimes, the best facilitation is not doing too much.

4.8. Ethical limits

4.9. Space preparation

The space greatly influences the quality of the experience. It's advisable to prepare the environment before the group arrives: avoid physical barriers, arrange chairs in a circle, ensure mutual visibility, leave room for movement, and minimize external interruptions.

Cultural spaces
When working in libraries, museums, or community centers, integrate the space as part of the process. The Valencia experience showed how these spaces contribute meaning, atmosphere, and connection to the work.

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4.10. Preliminary preparation of the session

Before facilitating, it is advisable to review: the real objective of the session, the appropriate level of depth for that group, the sequence and timing, the necessary materials, possible sensitive points, and alternatives if the group responds differently than expected.

4.11. During the session: signs to observe

- Who participates and who is left on the periphery
- When does the group's energy rise or fall?
- Is silence fertile or blocking?
- If someone gets too worked up
- If the activity is expanding beyond what the context can sustain

4.12. How to close properly

The closing is a methodologically crucial part. It's best not to end a session right after its most intense moment. A good closing might include: a final word, a common thread, a chosen daily practice, or a brief round of thanks.

4.13. What to do if something serious appears

Basic protocol
Do not react with alarm · Do not ask for details in public · Offer a pause · Speak to the person privately if appropriate · Know in advance what support resources are available in the area.

4.14. Facilitating in a community of practice

In communities of practice, facilitation incorporates a shared professional learning dimension: moments of methodological reflection, exchange of observations between facilitators, recording of learning and identification of useful adaptations.

4.15. Self-care of the facilitator

Facilitating requires energy and emotional availability. After a session, it can be helpful to: take a few minutes to pause, record what worked and what didn't, talk to another facilitator if there is one, and observe what remains open.

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Self-care is not an add-on
The facilitator does not need to be "perfectly well", but does need to be present and regulated enough not to unload their own tiredness or tension onto the group.

4.16. A final idea

Facilitating effectively doesn't mean controlling everything that happens. It means creating a clear, human, and caring framework where the group can do its own work. In this toolkit, facilitation is a practice of listening, judgment, and presence.

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Chapter 5. Field Learnings

This chapter summarizes the most significant lessons learned from the project's practical experience in Modena and Valencia. The Happiness in Practice approach is based not only on methodological ideas, but also on lived experiences where body, relationships, culture, listening, and community are concretely intertwined.

Modena, January 2026 · Workshop 1: Building a shared methodological basis

5.1. Build a shared methodological basis

The first international workshop was fundamental in creating common ground among the partners. One of the first lessons learned was the importance of approaching the work from the body and presence, not just from conceptual explanation. The value of explicitly presenting the project as an educational and preventative space, rather than a therapeutic one, also became clear.

5.2. From emotional needs to relational understanding

In Modena, the work focused on emotional needs and relational positions. The exercise on needs allowed participants to transform vague feelings into a more conscious understanding of their own experience. The work on relational positions, inspired by Transactional Analysis, showed that well-being also depends on how relationships are configured.

To realistically work on well-being, we need to move from the individual level to the relational level.

5.3. Culture, community health and renaissance processes

Another important contribution was the exploration of the relationship between art, community health, and processes of personal and collective rebirth.

Art and culture are not decorations
These are central languages for well-being, inclusion, and resilience. This idea, developed in Modena, strengthened the project's methodological framework.

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5.4. The value of informal spaces

The Modena experience emphasizes that breaks, shared breakfasts, and cultural visits are not peripheral to the educational process. Cohesion is not built solely within formal activities.

Valencia, March 2026 · Workshop 2: Literature, Empathy and Community

5.5. Literature, empathy and community

The second workshop demonstrated how the methodologies could be deployed in dialogue with cultural spaces and concrete community experiences. Working with Magda Szabó's La puerta opened a rich conversation about dignity, betrayal, care, dependence, boundaries, guilt, and power.

5.6. Cultural differences as a resource

The Italian participants tended to focus more on the internal and psychological dimension of the relationship narrated in the novel; the Spanish participants gave more weight to the social and power dimension.

The diversity of interpretation should not be seen as a problem, but as a resource to broaden collective understanding.

5.7. Empathy needs limits

Valencia reinforced a central idea: empathy cannot be thought of only as affective openness, but also as a practice that needs limits, respect, and awareness of power.

The central question
Where is the line between helping and controlling? How can we support without intruding? When can a well-intentioned intervention become a violation?

5.8. The body as immediate access to the community

Laughter yoga confirmed its value as a tool for cohesion and openness. It helped break down linguistic and cultural barriers, generating an atmosphere of genuine trust from the very first minutes.

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5.9. Cultural spaces as infrastructure for well-being

Libraries, museums, community health centers and cultural spaces can act as authentic infrastructures of well-being: environments of encounter, symbolic language, recognition, belonging, shared memory and non-stigmatizing forms of participation.

5.10. Community of practice: from event to process

The workshops should not be seen as isolated events, but as parts of a broader process. The project's sustainability depends as much on the tools as on the human network that supports them.

5.11. What do Modena and Valencia teach together?

In Modena, the emphasis was on building common ground and methodological trust. In Valencia, that foundation expanded to include empathy, dignity, care, and community resources. Together, both experiences show that the approach works best when it starts with the body, progresses gradually, and maintains an ethical framework.

> What makes this approach valuable is not just each activity separately, but the way in which body, listening, culture, community, and shared practice support each other.

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Chapter 6. Replicability and Adaptation

One of the central objectives of this toolkit is that it can be used, adapted, and recreated in different contexts. The project's experience shows that these methodologies can work in diverse contexts as long as some basic principles are maintained: clarity of framing, careful facilitation, gradual progression, attention to connections, and openness to the resources of the environment.

6.1. Start small

It's not necessary to reproduce the entire toolkit to get started. It's often more effective to begin with a short, manageable activity, observe how the group responds, and expand upon that experience: a short positive psychology exercise, a laughter yoga session, an everyday activity, a brief listening round.

6.2. Adapt without losing focus

Replicating does not mean copying. Activities may vary in duration, form, or intensity depending on the group, but it is important not to lose sight of the fundamentals: an educational rather than a therapeutic approach, voluntary participation, a gradual shift from the personal to the collective, a multiplicity of languages, and the centrality of connection and listening.

6.3. Train and support facilitators

Replicability depends largely on the quality of the facilitation. Long training sessions are not always necessary: an introductory session on the approach, shared reading of the toolkit, a trial run of one or two activities, and a subsequent discussion about what worked.

6.4. Create a small community of practice

One of the most solid ways to give continuity to the toolkit is to accompany its use with a community of practice, even if it is small and local: periodic meetings between facilitators, exchange of observations, shared bank of materials, collective documentation of learning.

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6.5. Adaptation to multilingual and intercultural groups

In multilingual contexts it is advisable to: reduce lengthy explanations, use more body language and symbols, offer clear and simple instructions, allow translation time, and choose activities that allow for different levels of verbal participation.

6.6. Adaptation to older people or groups with a slow pace

Reduce the number of activities, allow more time for talking, avoid changes that are too rapid, ensure the physical comfort of the space, and include more visual or written supports.

6.7. Working with cultural and community spaces

When possible, do not limit replication to classrooms or training rooms. Working in collaboration with cultural spaces can broaden the scope of the initiative, make it more accessible and less stigmatizing, and connect well-being with the local community. Libraries, museums, and community centers can be strategic partners.

6.8. Document the experience

For a methodology to grow and be shared, it is important to document what happens: what activity was done, how the group responded, what worked well, what was more difficult, and what should be adapted next time.

6.9. Incorporate daily practices to maintain continuity

Not all replication needs to be based on long workshops. Everyday micro-practices are a useful way to replicate activities in contexts with limited time or resources: sending a weekly practice, proposing a daily activity between meetings, creating a small local calendar.

6.10. Adjust the intensity according to the context

A reasonable sequence: start with low barrier-to-entry activities, observe the group's climate and trust, progressively introduce denser proposals, and never force high-involvement methodologies without sufficient context.

6.11. Building Sustainability

A methodology becomes sustainable when it leaves installed capacity in the territory: trained local facilitators, shared work habits, networks between organizations, valued cultural resources, and communities of practice sustained over time.

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6.12. What makes this approach replicable

What makes this toolkit replicable is that the activities are modular, adaptable, work with accessible resources, can start small, connect the individual with the collective, and are strengthened when inserted into a community of practice.

6.13. A final idea

Replicating this toolkit isn't about transferring a fixed model. It's about recreating, in each context, a way of working on well-being that combines listening, body awareness, connection, culture, participation, and shared learning. When this happens, even a small activity can spark meaningful processes.

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Attachments

Annex 1. Community Emotional Map — extended version

The Community Emotional Map (CEM) is a participatory tool designed to help a group identify, name, and collectively represent its emotional and relational landscape. It is not a geographical map, but a map of meaning: a visual, reflective, and collective tool that makes visible emotional needs, relational tensions, caregiving experiences, areas of vulnerability, cultural resources, and cohesive practices present in a community.

PROJECT FRAMEWORK

FOCUS AND INTEGRATION

The Community Emotional Map is developed within an adult education approach that integrates:

- Positive psychology
- Community resilience
- Creativity
- Physical practices
- Shared cultural participation

NATURE OF THE SPACE

IT IS NOT:

A clinical or therapeutic space.

IT IS A TOOL:

Educational and preventive, aimed at promoting listening, shared awareness, and collective well-being.

1. What is it for?

The CEM can be used in educational, cultural, social, and community contexts whenever there is a desire to better understand the emotional landscape of a group and create conditions conducive to collective well-being. It serves not only to identify needs but also to activate processes of shared reflection, strengthen relational awareness, and open new possibilities for action.

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Main uses

- Making visible emotional needs and experiences that often remain implicit
- Reading the quality of relationships within a group or community
- Exploring how recognition, listening, trust, and reciprocal visibility circulate
- Reflecting on care and its limits
- Identify cultural and community resources that support well-being
- Strengthening cohesion through shared experiences
- Gather qualitative elements useful for the design of future activities

2. Application contexts

The methodology can be adapted to very diverse contexts as long as there is an interest in working on well-being in a participatory and relational way. The CEM is especially useful when the aim is to understand a community not only from the perspective of its needs, but also from the perspective of the relationships, resources, and forms of cohesion that permeate it.

- Groups of adults, especially those aged 35 to 60, in vulnerable situations
- Local communities or neighborhood groups
- Associations, community networks and communities of practice
- Participants in artistic, cultural, or educational processes
- Groups in situations of vulnerability, isolation or transition
- Intercultural or multilingual contexts

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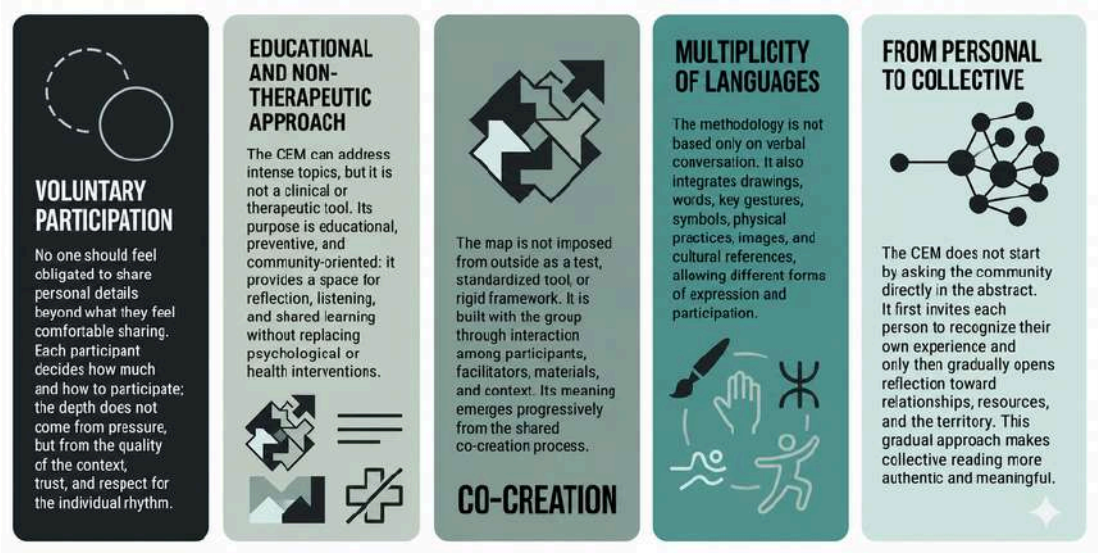
The ethical limit
The CEM is not a clinical or therapeutic space. It is an educational and preventative tool that can address intense content, but always operates within a framework of facilitation, active listening, and shared learning. This principle is one of the methodological foundations of Happiness in Practice.

3. Methodological principles

Before facilitating the construction of a Community Emotional Map, it is important to clarify some basic principles that guide the process. These are not formal rules, but rather methodological conditions that help ensure safety, coherence, and quality in the group experience.



4. The five levels

The CEM is structured around five interconnected levels that guide the group in a progressive movement from the personal core to the relational, community, and territorial dimensions. The first four can be imagined as concentric circles opening from the inside out. The fifth level is the transversal axis that runs through the entire experience and makes its embodiment possible.

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1	**Emotional needs and areas of life** This is the personal core of the CEM. It invites each participant to reflect on which needs they feel most present, most nurtured, or most lacking at this moment—such as recognition, security, autonomy, belonging, and joy—and to relate them to the main areas of their life: friendships, relationships, work, leisure time, and community. In the Modena Workshop, this work was developed through an exercise in identifying current emotional needs represented in a circular diagram.
2	**Relational nutrition** The second level focuses on the quality of relationships and how people acknowledge, support, or, conversely, ignore one another. The group explores which forms of relational nurturing flow easily—listening, trust, visibility, recognition—and which, in contrast, are weak or absent. In Modena, this dimension was addressed through the relational positions of Transactional Analysis.
3	**Empathy and boundaries** This is the level of care, and probably the most delicate and transformative aspect of the CEM. It doesn't simply present empathy as a positive abstract value, but rather invites us to explore the conditions that make safe, respectful, and non-invasive listening possible. In Valencia, this dimension was developed with particular intensity through reading and empathy circles centered on Magda Szabó's *La puerta* (The Door), used as a protected projective mirror to reflect on dignity, vulnerability, betrayal, dependency, and the boundary between accompanying and destroying.
4	**Cultural and artistic resources** This level broadens the perspective to encompass the territory and introduces a more systemic dimension to the CEM. The group identifies places, activities, and cultural resources that can support well-being, connection, and participation: libraries, museums, cultural centers, public spaces, artistic practices, and community health settings. Culture is not presented as incidental entertainment, but as an infrastructure for well-being and belonging.
5	**Body and cohesion — The transverse axis** It is not an outer ring or a decorative element, but the transversal dimension that gives embodied form to the collective experience. It runs through all the other levels and reminds us that community well-being is built not only through words, but also through gesture, rhythm, movement, presence, and shared practices. Throughout the workshops, this level emerged through both embodied and symbolic forms of cohesion: Laughter Yoga created openness and relational availability, while the red thread became a tangible symbol of connection woven from real encounters.

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5. How to prepare a session

The CEM is structured around five interconnected levels that guide the group in a progressive movement from the personal core to the relational, community, and territorial dimensions. The first four can be imagined as concentric circles opening from the inside out. The fifth level is the transversal axis that runs through the entire experience and makes its embodiment possible.

Materials needed

- Large paper or cardstock with concentric circles, or a printable base in A3 format
- Markers, sticky notes, cards, or index cards for collecting keywords
- Colored thread, especially red thread as a symbolic element of connection
- Images, symbols, or evocative objects that facilitate reflection
- Space with chairs in a circle and visible surfaces where the collective map can be built or hung.

Basic working framework

Before starting the session, it is important to establish a basic working agreement that helps create an atmosphere of trust, respect and security:

- Listen without interrupting: each participant should have the opportunity to speak without being interrupted, corrected, or diverted by others.
- Confidentiality: what emerges in the session must be treated with discretion, protecting the trust of the group.
- Freedom to not share everything: participation is always voluntary. Each person decides what they want to contribute and how far they want to go.
- Without judgment or hasty interpretations: the CEM is not a space to diagnose, label, or quickly interpret what other people feel.
- Respect for personal limits: each participant has different rhythms, sensitivities and ways of being present.

DURATION

A full Community Emotional Mapping session lasts approximately three hours, including opening, individual work, group discussion, map construction, and closing. Each level can also be conducted as a standalone workshop of about 45 minutes, depending on the context and objectives of the process. For vulnerable groups, a slower pace, more frequent breaks, and greater flexibility in facilitation are recommended.

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6. Step-by-step development

The nine phases presented below guide the group on a progressive journey from personal experience to building a collective understanding of the community. They should not be understood as a rigid or linear framework, but rather as a methodological compass.

1	**Opening and climate creation** The session opens with a brief introduction to the map's purpose. It's helpful to begin with a short physical warm-up activity: a breathing exercise, a presence practice, or a shared gesture. The Laughter Yoga experience in Modena and Valencia showed how this type of opening facilitates attention and relational availability from the outset.
2	**Individual exploration of the personal core** Each participant begins by working individually. They identify their current emotional needs, assess different areas of their life, and jot down words or images that describe how they feel. This step fosters initial self-awareness before moving on to group dialogue.
3	**Share in pairs or small groups** After the individual work, people share their ideas in pairs or small groups. This intermediate step facilitates the transition to collective work without forcing immediate public exposure.
4	**Reading the relational dimension** The group begins to identify words, situations, and patterns that describe how recognition circulates in the community: what generates support, what produces invisibility, what dynamics foster balance, and which create tension.
5	**Empathy and boundaries** A more attentive space for listening opens up: a round, a circle of dialogue, or narrative mediation. In Valencia, Magda Szabó's "La Puerta" (The Door) was used as a protected projective mirror to work through difficult emotions without intruding on people. The big question: when does help become an invasion?
6	**Identification of cultural resources** The group broadens its perspective to include the environment. Places, activities, and resources that foster well-being, a sense of belonging, or opportunities for connection are identified: libraries, cultural centers, community health spaces, museums, and creative workshops.
7	**Activation of the body-cohesion axis** A shared bodily or symbolic practice is incorporated: a movement dynamic, an action with the thread, a manual construction, a brief sequence of Laughter Yoga or any common gesture that helps to embody the bond.

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8	**Construction of the collective map** Using the collected materials, the group creates a shared visual representation. Words, images, symbols, and threads are distributed across different levels. The goal is not to produce an aesthetically perfect object, but a meaningful representation.
9	**Closing and projection** The session can conclude with a final word from each participant. It is helpful to invite the group to identify one or two next steps: a need that deserves further attention, a resource that could be activated, or a practice that would be worth repeating.

7. The role of the facilitator

The facilitator of the Community Emotional Map should not interpret the community from the outside or impose conclusions. Their main role is to create the conditions for participants to recognize their own experiences, listen to others, and construct meaning together. Facilitating a Community Emotional Map requires sensitivity rather than control: the facilitator supports the process, maintains the framework, and guides the reflection without taking ownership of it.

- Create a safe space and protect its boundaries
- Formulate generative questions instead of making assessments
- It maintains the rhythm of the session without imposing the pace.
- It helps the group move from the personal to the collective
- Accompany the final reflection without forcing its meaning
- Avoid turning the session into a clinical trial or an abstract debate.

KEY PRINCIPLE

The quality of facilitation depends on the ability to connect with people's lived experiences and to foster connections without imposing them. A session can be intense and remain safe, provided the facilitator knows how to manage the pace, boundaries, and purpose of the process.

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8. Risks to avoid

	FORCING INTIMACY Depth isn't achieved by soliciting confessions or forcing people to share more than they want. It arises when the context offers enough safety, respect, and freedom for words to emerge naturally.
	REDUCING EXPERIENCE TO ABSTRACT CONVERSATION The strength of CEM doesn't depend solely on verbal exchange. Its potential also lies in its visual, bodily, and symbolic dimensions. If everything is reduced to talking, an essential part of the methodology is lost.
	CONVERT THE MAP INTO A LIST OF PROBLEMS The methodology should allow for the emergence of shortcomings, tensions, and vulnerabilities, but also resources, support, and opportunities. The CEM does not seek to present a negative image of the community, but rather a more complete and dynamic understanding of its experiences.
	CONFUSING FACILITATION WITH THERAPY The CEM framework is educational and preventative, not clinical. Although intense content may appear, the session should not become a therapeutic intervention. Maintaining this clarity is fundamental both in practice and in the toolkit.

9. Guiding questions by level

The questions below can accompany the work at different levels of the map. They should not be used as a rigid questionnaire, but rather as open-ended guidelines to support reflection, facilitate listening, and help the group name what is emerging.

Personal core (L1)	What do you need most at this moment in your life? / What area of your life do you feel most balanced? / Where do you experience lack, tension, or fatigue?
Relational level (L2)	What helps people feel recognized? / Who might feel invisible? / What's missing for relationships to be more nourishing?
Level of empathy (L3)	Where do you truly feel heard? / When does help become intrusion? / What makes trust and respect possible?

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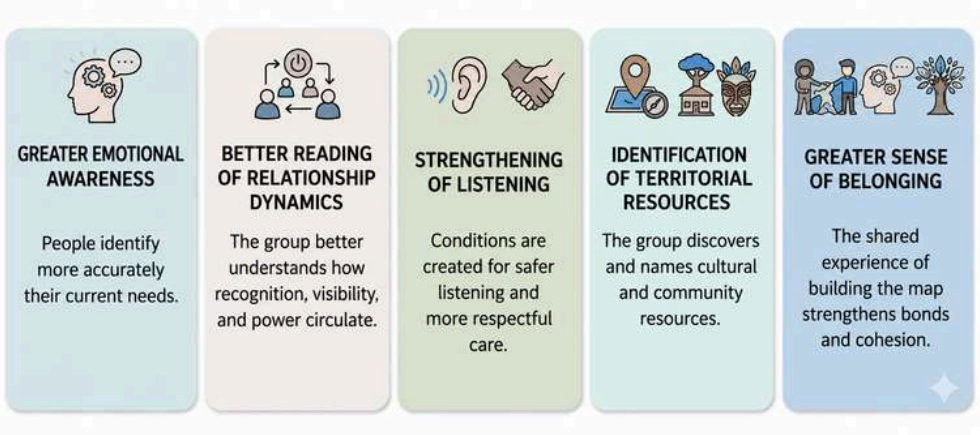
Cultural resources (L4)	What places in the surrounding area support well-being? / What spaces could be more welcoming or accessible? / What cultural resources deserve greater visibility?
Body-cohesion axis (L5)	What practices help us feel connected? / Where does the body speak louder than words? / What creates an immediate sense of connection within the group?

10. Expected Results

When the methodology is carefully facilitated, CEM can produce very valuable results for both the group and the organization or context in which it is used.



11. Conclusion

Community Emotional Mapping is a facilitation practice that enables a group to name what they feel, interpret their experiences, and recognize what can support them. It begins with emotional needs, explores relationships, examines empathy and boundaries, values the community's cultural resources, and holds everything together through the body and cohesion.

It's a simple tool in form, but profound in its effects. It doesn't just produce a map: it produces shared awareness. And from that awareness, new activities, new connections, and new forms of community well-being can emerge.

Its strength lies in not separating dimensions that in real life always appear intertwined: personal needs, relationships, care, dignity, culture, territory and body.

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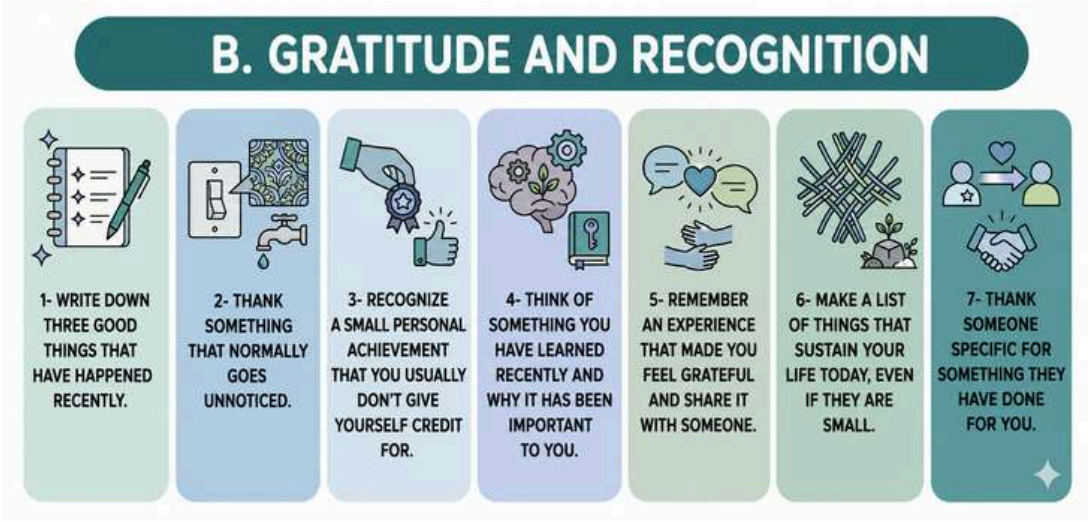
Appendix 2. Everyday practices — curated selection

Everyday practices represent the lighter, more accessible, and sustainable dimension of the project. Their purpose is to translate the Happiness in Practice approach into daily life through small, repeatable, and realistic actions. They can be used between sessions, as the opening or closing of a workshop, as a weekly voluntary task, or as choice cards at the start of an activity.



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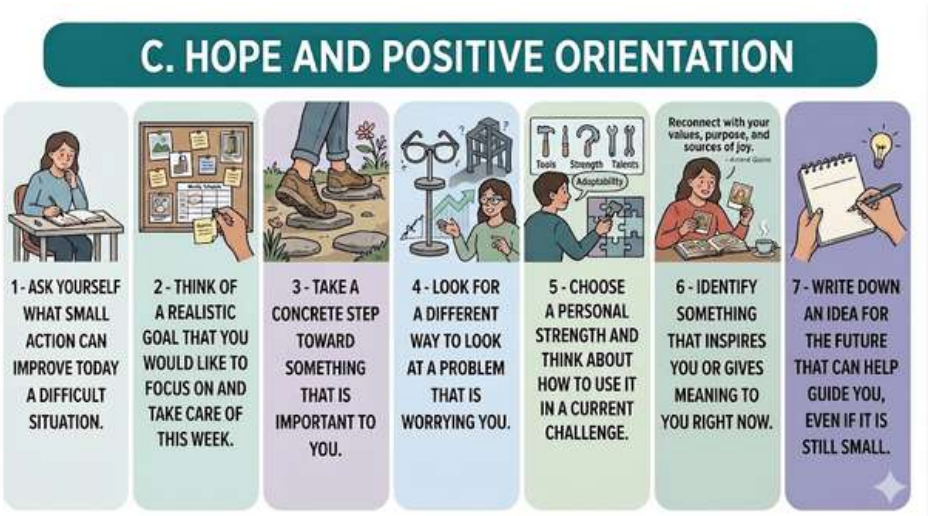

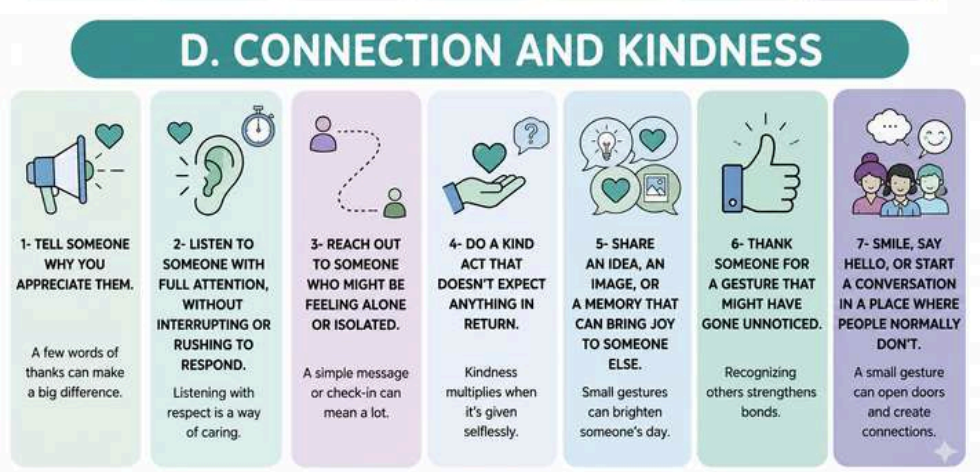

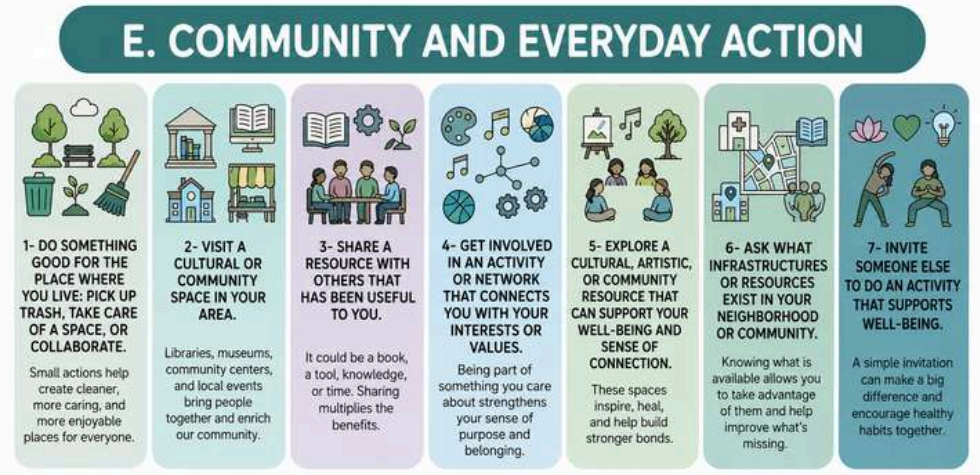

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Annex 3. Work templates

3.1. Session planning template

Session Title	
Date	
Location	
Facilitator	
Total Duration	
Number of Participants	
Group Profile	
Main Objective	
Objectives	1. 2. 3.
Opening	

Main Activity	
Integration	
Closing	
Materials	
Aspects to Take Care Of	
Adaptations	
Resources From	

3.2. Wheel of Needs

Draw a circle and divide it into sections. In each section, write a need that is relevant to you right now. Suggested needs: recognition, security, autonomy, belonging, joy, rest, meaning, creativity, support, tranquility.

Questions to guide your reflection: What needs do you feel most present today? Which ones are being met? Which ones seem to be neglected? In what areas of your life is this most noticeable? What support or small change could help you?

3.3. Brief observation sheet / Field Notes

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Date	
Location	
Activity or Session	
Number of Participants	
Group Profile	
What Was Done	*(Sequence Description)*

REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS	
What Worked Well	...
What Was Most Challenging	...
How the Group Responded	• Participation: • Energy: • Key Moments:
What Was Adapted	...
What We Learned	...
Next Time	...

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3.4. Brief adaptation guide

If the group is new: Begin with body movement, breathing exercises, or brief suggestions. Avoid too much personal exposure. Reinforce the clarity of the framework.

With linguistic or cultural diversity: Reduce lengthy explanations. Use more images, gestures, and symbols. Speak in simple sentences. Allow time for rephrasing.

If the group needs a slower pace: Reduce the number of activities. Allow more time for transitions. Avoid changes that are too rapid. Reinforce integration and closure.

If time is short: Choose a single main activity. Always leave a short closing space. Use everyday practices for continuity.

If the activity introduces a lot of content: Don't delve deeper than the context can handle. Refocus on breathing or brief writing. Remember the non-therapeutic framework.

Annex 4. Community of practice — operational summary

The Community of Practice (CoP) is one of the core dimensions of Happiness in Practice. It is not a secondary component of the project, but rather a shared learning structure where educators, facilitators, and practitioners can meet, exchange experiences, develop resources, and explore new ways to promote well-being together.

What can a community of practice offer?

- Regular spaces for exchange between facilitators and professionals
- Joint reflection on methodologies and adaptations
- Mutual support and circulation of materials and resources
- Learning from real experience
- Shared documentation of adaptations and findings
- Continuity between specific activities and longer processes

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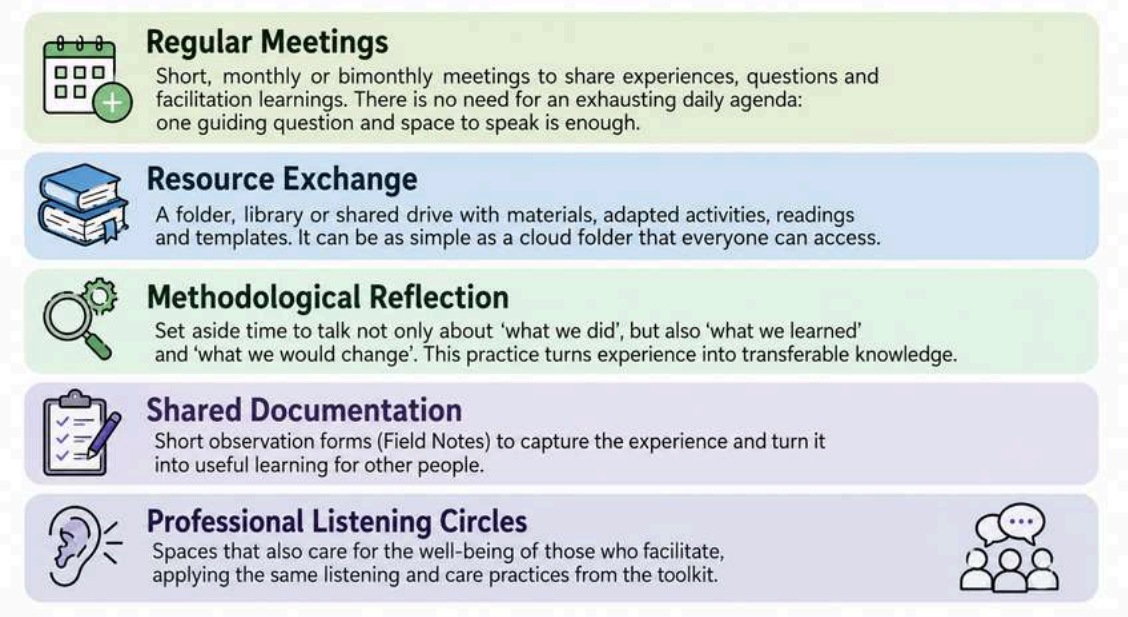
How to activate a small-scale community of practice



Recommendations for supporting it

- Start with modest and realistic goals
- Focus on regularity rather than quantity
- Make room for trust, not just tasks
- Sharing concrete resources and recognizing the value of small experiences
- Avoid making everything dependent on just one person

A community of practice is not just a group of people who meet. It is a way of learning together based on a shared interest, a network of relationships, and a practice that is built collectively.

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Annex 5. Laughter Yoga

A brief guide for facilitators

1. What is

Laughter Yoga is a group practice that combines induced laughter exercises with conscious breathing and body movement. It doesn't depend on humor, jokes, or being in a good mood beforehand.

Their interest within the toolkit is not in "making people laugh" as entertainment, but in offering an accessible tool to activate the body, reduce inhibition, promote connection between participants and open a group climate more available for subsequent work.

Project framework

Within the framework of Happiness in Practice, this practice is situated within an educational, preventative, and not therapeutic context. It is used as a resource for openness, cohesion, and shared energy, especially useful in new groups, multicultural contexts, or moments of fatigue, rigidity, or relational distance.

2. Why we included it in this project

The project works with adults who often live under accumulated pressure, daily stress, or experiences of isolation. In this context, Laughter Yoga offers a physical and collective pathway to well-being that does not require complex verbal elaboration or direct personal exposure.

It can help create presence, availability, and an initial sense of belonging, especially when the group is not yet confident enough to engage in more thoughtful proposals.

The experience of Happiness in Practice showed that this practice works especially well in international and multilingual groups because:

- It reduces dependence on verbal language.
- It fosters an immediate connection through the body, the gaze, and shared play.
- It is accessible regardless of language level or prior experience.
- It requires no materials or complex technical preparation.

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3. Basic principles

1 A sense of humor isn't necessary.
The practice isn't about being funny or spontaneously entertaining. It's based on the idea that the body can engage in laughter as a form of exercise and that, over time and through group interaction, that laughter can become more genuine.

2 Action opens the state.
It's not necessary to "feel good" before starting. Often, starting with the body helps to shift the internal state and generate greater openness, energy, or availability.

3 The group facilitates the transition.
Practice works better in a group because eye contact, shared play, and emotional contagion reduce inhibition and sustain the experience.

4 Breathing matters.
The combination of laughter, movement, and deep breathing is an essential part of the method. It's not just about laughing, but about activating the body more fully.

5 Participation should be gradual.
Not everyone enters in the same way or at the same pace. Facilitation should allow for progressive integration, without pressure or ridicule.

4. How to prepare a session

Before we begin, it's worth taking care of a few simple aspects:

- comfortable clothing and enough space to move around
- group in a circle or with the possibility of seeing each other
- brief and clear explanation before starting
- warm tone and not overly explanatory
- voluntary participation from the beginning

Within this toolkit, it typically works best in 10- to 20-minute sessions, especially as an opening or reactivation exercise. It's not necessary to complete all the exercises: a short, well-rounded session is preferable to a long, rushed one.

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5. Recommended short sequence

Five basic exercises are proposed. The facilitator can adjust the duration or substitute exercises depending on the group.

#	Exercise	What is it for?
1	**Laughter at the greeting**	Walking around the space, greeting other people while laughing softly and making brief eye contact. A good way to break the ice and start building relationships.
2	**Laughter from the heart**	Open your arms and chest while laughing, accompanying it with deep breathing. This helps to broaden your body's expression and create a feeling of openness.
3	**Milkshake laugh**	Use imaginary glasses and simple play gestures. This structure helps more inhibited people to participate more easily, because the brain has a small supporting narrative.
4	**Lion's laughter**	Open your mouth, stick out your tongue, and activate your face and hands like claws. This is useful for releasing facial tension and breaking inhibitions. It works best when the group has already warmed up a bit.
5	**Laughter of appreciation**	Direct a friendly gesture of acknowledgment to the group while maintaining a gentle laugh. This works very well as a transition to the closing.

6. Closure and integration

It's best not to end abruptly. After the exercises, a short integration sequence can be used:

1	**Laughter building**	Start with a gentle smile and gradually build to a more hearty laugh. Keep it short, no more than a minute.
2	**Humming (vibration)**	Exhale with a soft, continuous "Hmmm" sound. It helps to lower your activation and feel your body.
3	**Deep breathing**	Two or three slow, conscious breaths to settle the state.
4	**Moment of silence**	A few seconds' pause before rejoining the group.
5	**Quick question**	How does your body feel now? Or what sensation do you have afterward? The goal is to help the activation settle and transform into presence.

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The goal of the closing is to help the activation settle and transform into presence, not to leave the group in a state of overexcitement.

7. Aspects to consider

- Do not impose the practice: it is always offered as an invitation, never as an obligation.
- Don't ridicule the initial discomfort: it's normal and part of the process.
- Avoid overly long sessions: it's better to do fewer and have the group do well.
- Simplify if the group is very inhibited: starting with just the greeting and breathing may be enough.
- Always maintain an educational, not therapeutic, framework.
- Do not present the practice as a universal solution to complex problems.

Note on language
When presenting this practice, it's best to avoid overly absolute statements about its physiological or clinical effects. It's preferable to speak in terms of "it may benefit," "it may help," or "it is used as an accessible practice." Laughter Yoga is not a substitute for clinical or therapeutic care.

8. Recommended use within this toolkit

In Happiness in Practice, Laughter Yoga is especially useful for:

Session Moments • opening of workshops • reactivation after a pause • preparation for reflective work	**Group contexts** • new groups without prior trust • international or multilingual groups • moments of tiredness or relational distance
Recommended duration 10–20 minutes as an opening or reactivation. Up to 30 minutes if it is the central focus of the session.	**Recommended training** No specific training is required to use this guide. For longer sessions or groups with special needs, prior participation in a guided session is recommended.

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- *Andrea Zudaire – European Social Art*
- *Domingo Ferrandis – European Social Art*

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